

Incest and poverty not related, says Mahathir

By NICK LEONG and
SUSAN TAM

PETALING JAYA: Incest is not a problem of poverty, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The public should not associate the two - incest and poverty - together, he told reporters at a Workers' Day function at the National Public Administration Institute yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said although incest involved mostly the poor in Malaysia, there were cases in other countries which also involved the rich.

"So please, do not link incest with the poor because the two are not related," he said.

STAR - 2 MAY 2002
Dr Mahathir said incest occurred due to moral decadence among the people.

"It is not a matter of whether the penalty (for such offences) is too stiff or lenient. If we are taught good values from young, then such a thing will not happen," he said, adding that parents and teachers need to instil good values in children.

However, he said some religious teachers were more interested in teaching politics to their students.

"When we want to give sex education to students, they think only about that (sex).

"Actually it is closely associated with good behaviour."

The desire to dominate their victims is one of the reasons

which drive sexual offenders to commit incest, according to social activist Kamal Affandi Hashim.

They usually use their authority over the victim to commit the heinous acts, he added.

"They are 'coward rapists' because they use authority as a weapon against the victims to fulfil their desires within their own families," said Kamal Affandi, who is the Selangor chairman of the Malaysian Crime Prevention Foundation, in an interview here.

He said incest also occurs among families who had migrated from their hometowns.

"Such crimes would not be

committed in places where the offender is known to his neighbours in the community.

"But once they move to a new place, that controlling agent is removed; thus, allowing for the crime to take place," he said.

Kamal Affandi said although the reported cases show that incest was prevalent among poorer families in a particular community, it would not be fair to isolate these acts to just that group.

"There are many unreported cases and some of them do occur in middle-class families and among well-educated individuals," he said, adding that it was up to the victims to speak up and report the incidents.

He said with the support

networks offered by the Government and agencies, victims should be encouraged to seek their help.

He added that taking stern action against the offenders might help to minimise their urges but would not completely deter them from committing the crime again.

"MCA Hotline Service chairman Tai Sim Yew said castration and whipping should be meted out if harsher penalties could not bring offenders to their senses.

It is high time that cases of incestuous relationships be dealt with and not swept under the carpet by members of the affected family under the guise of shame, fear and economic livelihood, she said.